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1
                     UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
                    FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY
 2
 3
                                   CIVIL ACTION NUMBER:
                                   19-md-02875
    IN RE: VALSARTAN PRODUCTS
    LIABILITY LITIGATION
 5
                                   TELEPHONIC STATUS
                                   CONFERENCE
 6
 7
         Mitchell H. Cohen Building & U.S. Courthouse
         4th & Cooper Streets
 8
         Camden, New Jersey 08101
         January 4, 2023
 9
         Commencing at 1:30 p.m.
10
                             THE HONORABLE ROBERT B. KUGLER
    BEFORE:
                             UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE
11
    APPEARANCES:
12
         MAZIE SLATER KATZ & FREEMAN, LLC
13
         BY: ADAM M. SLATER, ESQUIRE
         103 Eisenhower Parkway
14
         Roseland, New Jersey 07068
         For the Plaintiffs
15
16
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         BY: VAHAN MIKAYELYAN, ESQUIRE
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18
         For the Plaintiffs
19
         FLEMING, NOLEN & JEZ, LLP
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21
         Houston, Texas 77056
         For the Plaintiffs
22
23
              Ann Marie Mitchell, Official Court Reporter
                   AnnMarie Mitchell@njd.uscourts.gov
24
                             (856) 576-7018
25
      Proceedings recorded by mechanical stenography; transcript
               produced by computer-aided transcription.
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1
    A P P E A R A N C E S (Continued):
 2
         GREENBERG TRAURIG LLP
 3
         BY: STEVEN M. HARKINS, ESQUIRE
         3333 Piedmont Road, NE, Suite 2500
 4
         Atlanta, Georgia 30305
         For the Defendants, Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.,
 5
         Teva Pharmaceuticals USA, Inc., Actavis LLC,
         and Actavis Pharma, Inc.
 6
 7
    ALSO PRESENT:
 8
         LORETTA SMITH, ESQUIRE
         Judicial Law Clerk to The Honorable Robert B. Kugler
 9
         Larry MacStravic, Courtroom Deputy
10
11
12
13
14
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16
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24
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1
             (PROCEEDINGS held telephonically before The Honorable
 2
    ROBERT B. KUGLER at 1:30 p.m.)
 3
             THE COURT: Good afternoon, it's Judge Kugler. Happy
 4
    New Year, everyone.
 5
             RESPONSE: Good afternoon, Judge. Happy New Year to
 6
    you, Judge!
 7
             THE COURT: All I see on the agenda today are these
 8
    orders to show cause, and there's only apparently one of those
 9
    left.
10
             Who wants to speak for the defendants on these?
11
             MR. HARKINS: Good afternoon, Your Honor. This is
12
    Steve Harkins with Greenberg Traurig for the Teva defendants
1.3
    and the joint defense group. I'll be handling this today.
14
             THE COURT: Apparently only the Collins, Carrie
15
    Collins, matter remains unresolved.
16
             Is that still true?
17
             MR. HARKINS: That is true, Your Honor. The Collins
18
    matter is the only case where we are asking for dismissal.
19
             One update to that section of the chart, the Owens
20
    case, which is listed here for continuation, has been
21
    resolved, so that can be removed.
22
             So we would ask only for the Collins matter to be
23
    dismissed, and then to continue the orders to show cause in
24
    the other five cases, Bailey, Amoia, Bishop, Conley and Lewis,
25
    to the next case management conference.
```

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1
             THE COURT: Is anyone here to speak on the Carrie
 2
    Collins matter?
 3
             MR. MIKAYELYAN: Good morning, Your Honor. Vahan
    Mikayelyan on behalf of Carrie Collins.
 5
             THE COURT: Yeah. What's going on?
 6
             MR. MIKAYELYAN: So what we did, Your Honor, we filed
 7
    a request to dismiss the action without prejudice yesterday.
    And this morning a text was entered on the docket that the
 9
    case is terminated.
10
             THE COURT: I'm sorry, what was on the docket this
7 7
    morning?
12
             MR. MIKAYELYAN: The docket number is number 30. And
13
    we filed the request to dismiss in the individual case
14
    number --
15
             THE COURT: Right.
16
             MR. MIKAYELYAN: -- 16386.
17
             THE COURT: Yeah.
18
             MR. MIKAYELYAN: And this morning I checked the
19
    docket. There was a text entered that the case is terminated.
20
             THE COURT: Well, the question is whether it's to be
21
    terminated with or without prejudice.
22
             You apparently asked that it be terminated without
23
    prejudice?
24
             MR. MIKAYELYAN: Yes, Your Honor.
25
             THE COURT: But you don't have the consent of defense
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1
    counsel. Correct?
 2
             MR. MIKAYELYAN: No, I did not. But what we did, we
 3
    filed a request to dismiss under FRCP 41(a)(2) with the
 4
    Court's order.
 5
             THE COURT: Well, I can only do it on conditions.
 6
             If the defendants won't agree to dismissal without
 7
    prejudice, then how can I do that?
 8
             MR. HARKINS: Your Honor, this is Steve Harkins for
 9
    defendants.
10
             Typically we have not opposed voluntary dismissals,
11
    given that no answers have been filed, in the majority of
12
    these cases.
1.3
             In this particular action, there was an answer filed
14
    by the ZHP defendants, which would require consent of those
15
    parties to stipulate to a voluntary dismissal.
16
             Not representing the ZHP entities, I can only say
17
    that I think Your Honor is correct. Without such a
18
    stipulation, the voluntary dismissal, which would ordinarily
19
    satisfy defendants, I don't believe is operative, so we would
20
    still ask for this case to be dismissed pursuant to the order
21
    to show cause process with prejudice.
22
             THE COURT: Is anybody from Skadden here who wants to
23
    speak about this?
24
             Does anybody from Skadden want to agree to a
25
    dismissal without prejudice?
```

1 They represent ZHP. 2 (No response.) 3 THE COURT: Hearing nothing, and on the application of defense counsel, that will be dismissed with prejudice. 4 MR. MIKAYELYAN: Your Honor, regarding the dismissal 5 6 of the actions, under 41(a)(2), the section specifically says 7 that there is an opportunity to file and request dismissal without prejudice if a defendant has pleaded -- if a defendant 9 has not pleaded a counterclaim. 10 And although there was an answer filed, there was no 11 counterclaim pleaded. And this section gives the Court the 12 opportunity to dismiss the case without prejudice. 1.3 And at the same time -- at the same time, the reason 14 that the defendant requests dismissal with prejudice is that 15 they think the PFS will have a core deficiency related to any 16 area where an information regarding that cancer diagnosis is 17 required. We disagree with the defendants' interpretation. 18 19 Since the case -- if this interpretation is accepted, any part 20 of the plaintiff's fact sheet that is not applicable to any 21 plaintiff and is therefore left blank or identified as 22 nonapplicable may render the PFS deficient. 23 The plaintiff's fact sheet itself differentiates 24 cancer diagnosis and noncancer injuries, which means that the

requirement of cancer diagnosis is not mandatory within the

meaning and interpretation of the PFS.

1.3

My second argument will be that the initial PFS was submitted on October 12th, and we received the deficiency notice via the MDL Centrality from the defense counsel on October 12th. And it took us five days to cure the deficiencies.

Later on, our expectation was that further deficiency notice is going to be given via MDL Centrality, but instead, a chart was circulated. And for some reason, as a result of a mistake or inadvertence, we were not on notice regarding the deficiency.

And besides that, the order to show cause itself asks for a letter to be sent to the plaintiffs regarding any deficiency, but instead a chart was circulated.

Even after that, after receiving the Court's order to show cause on November 30, we started working, and we started curing the deficiencies. And we have cured all of the deficiencies -- most of the deficiencies, not all of them, of course.

We submitted the authorizations with witness signatures and medical records and bills that the plaintiff had in her possession. And also we were in the process of working and curing the rest of the deficiencies. And I don't think that the defendants' request to dismiss this case with prejudice is fair.

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1
             That's all from me, Your Honor.
 2
             THE COURT: Can you go back a minute.
 3
             Are you saying that Ms. Collins does or does not have
 4
    a diagnosis of cancer?
 5
             MR. MIKAYELYAN: She does not have a cancer diagnosis
 6
    at this point, but she has a diagnosis that is a precursor to
 7
    diagnosis. And the dismissal of this case with prejudice will
    preclude her, you know, filing an -- to refile the action when
 9
    she is diagnosed with the cancer in the future.
10
             THE COURT: Well, why do you say she'll be diagnosed
11
    in the future if she hasn't been diagnosed now? I don't
12
    understand what you're saying.
1.3
             MR. MIKAYELYAN: She has -- she has a diagnosis which
14
    is -- which is a precursor to cancer, which is endometrial
15
    hypertensia (ph), and -- which is a precursor to cervical
16
    cancer. There is a possibility that she might be diagnosed
17
    with cancer in the future.
18
             THE COURT: And you're going to go to trial with a
19
    client who has a, quote, possibility of cancer in the future.
20
             Is that what you're saying? That's what you want to
21
    do?
22
             MR. MIKAYELYAN: And what we are willing to do, what
23
    we want to do, to dismiss the case without prejudice, and if
24
    there is a future cancer diagnosis, to be able to refile -- to
25
    refile the case.
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THE COURT: I'm going to grant the motion to dismiss
with prejudice. You've acknowledged that you have not
complied despite three notices for the requirements.
         So the motion of the defense will be granted. The
Carrie Collins matter will be dismissed with prejudice.
         The Mirabile, McCarty, Yount, Parker, Kwoka,
K-W-O-K-A, Hernandez, Quarles, Bass, King, Thompson and Clark
matters, those orders to show cause are dismissed.
         The Owens and Bailey, Amoia, Bishop, Conley and Lewis
matters, they will be relisted.
         And that Owens matter order to show cause is
dismissed.
         So now you're seeking an order to show cause,
Mr. Harkins, on five cases; is that correct? Any update on
those?
         MR. HARKINS: That's correct, Your Honor. No updates
on these five. We request orders to show cause returnable at
the next case management conference in each of these five
matters.
         THE COURT: All right. The Levin firm is on three of
them, the Fleming firm is on two of them.
         Anyone want to speak on behalf of those cases?
         MR. HOBBS: Your Honor, this is David Hobbs.
         I can speak to the Fleming cases. I don't know if
you want to start with --
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1
             THE COURT: Sure. You've got Mary Ann Knudson and
 2
    Diana Balay, B-A-L-A-Y.
 3
             MR. HOBBS: Yes, Your Honor. So I'll start with Mary
 4
    Ann Knudson.
 5
             The only deficiency listed on there, it says need
 6
    medical expense records for all medical expenses listed in
 7
    Section IIIG of the fact sheet.
 8
             So we've given them all the records that we have, and
 9
    we've put expenses and -- we've bundled up expenses in that
10
    section.
11
             The only thing that is pending is we have medical
12
    requests -- we have billing request records out to -- to
1.3
    Medicare, and so we're waiting for Medicare to return back any
14
    records.
15
             So I don't -- I think that we have complied with
16
    exactly what is required from Ms. Knudson. I don't -- I don't
17
    see there's a deficiency at all, so I'm just -- I'm not
18
    sure -- I actually reached out earlier today to see what the
19
    issue is, because I -- honestly, I don't understand what we're
20
    being asked to do at this point.
21
             THE COURT: You're being asked to provide the
22
    records. That's all.
23
             MR. HOBBS: Right.
24
             THE COURT: You'll have -- you'll have another four
25
    weeks to do it.
```

sure they'll continue to do that.

1.3

How about the other one, the Balay, the representative of Rodriguez?

MR. HOBBS: For Ms. Rodriguez -- Mr. Rodriguez died in June of 2022, so this is a very recent death. The family had been working through to get -- to get basically authority to get -- request all the records, which we have. We've requested everything. I believe that we -- we did an amended fact sheet back at the -- let's see.

Yeah. We did an amended fact sheet at the end of November.

So the only thing that's listed on here, it says incomplete medical expenses, pharmacy records showing proof of sartan medications, and then it generally refers to the incompleteness of the plaintiff's fact sheet.

I believe that our amendment addressed anything in terms of substantial information from the plaintiff's fact sheet perspective.

The pharmacy records I believe are the only thing that are actually pending, because we've also included all medical expenses and totalled those up.

For the pharmacy records, those are with the VA. And again, it's a situation where we've requested and the VA has just not produced anything yet, so we keep following up. But, I mean, we don't have the ability to produce something that we

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1
    don't have.
 2
             And I just -- I still don't see that as a deficiency,
 3
    but...
 4
             THE COURT: Well, the pharmacy records are pretty
 5
    important in this case. But anyway, you've got more time.
 6
    Work with Mr. Harkins on this. I mean, you're doing the best
 7
    you can, and that's fine. You'll have more time. And be in
    touch with defense counsel before the next order to show cause
 9
    return date. And if you're making progress and they're
10
    satisfied you're making process, I'm sure they'll agree to
11
    carry it.
12
             MR. HOBBS: Yes. No, Your Honor. I understand.
                                                               And
13
    I appreciate that. And I just -- again, for the record, I
14
    need to object just to preserve any error that is -- again,
15
    this is not a deficiency. We have complied with the discovery
16
    process as much as capable.
17
             But I do understand from a practical standpoint that
18
    we'll have additional opportunity to hopefully supply this
19
    information.
20
             THE COURT: Okay. Then we have eight -- well, I'll
21
    go back to that.
22
             I guess I should put on the record, the five are
23
    Estate of James Willis; Estate of Gale, G-A-L-E, Barber; Mary
24
    Ann Knudson, K-N-U-D-S-O-N; Kenneth Bacque, B-A-C-Q-U-E, III;
25
```

and Diana Balay, B-A-L-A-Y, the representative of Rodriguez.

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1
    They will all be listed for orders to show cause on the next
    return date.
 3
             MR. HARKINS: Apologies, Your Honor. This is Steve
    Harkins for the defendants.
 4
 5
             Just while we have been on this call, I received an
 6
    update that the fourth case on this list, Kenneth Bacque,
 7
    B-A-C-Q-U-E, has been cured. And we can withdraw the request
    for an order to show cause with respect to that matter.
 9
             THE COURT: Okay. Number 4, Kenneth Bacque,
10
    B-A-C-Q-U-E, III is withdrawn. Good. Progress.
11
             So that leaves eight that you want to relist again.
12
             Any update on those?
1.3
             MR. HARKINS: No updates from defendants, Your Honor.
14
    We would ask just to carry these forward to the next agenda
15
    statement.
16
             THE COURT: Any objections from plaintiffs' counsel?
17
             (No response.)
18
             THE COURT: Thomas Donahue; Mark Czajkowski,
19
    C-Z-A-J-K-O-W-S-K-I; Beverly Thomson, T-H-O-M-S-O-N; Robert
20
    Casper; Sheri, S-H-E-R-I, Barone; Jacqueline Carter,
21
    Individually and Administrator for the Estate of James Carter;
22
    Karlene, K-A-R-L-E-N-E, Smith; and the Estate of Joseph
23
    Kreseski, K-R-E-S-E-S-K-I, they will be listed next time on a
24
    second listing.
25
             All right. I think that covers the agenda items.
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1
             Would any -- do we have to discuss anything else
 2
    anybody has?
 3
             How about from the plaintiffs, any other issues?
 4
             (No response.)
 5
             THE COURT: None. How about defense counsel, any
 6
    other issues?
 7
             MR. HARKINS: I don't believe so, Your Honor.
 8
             THE COURT: All right. Well, we have to start moving
 9
    towards the bellwether trials, and I'm looking at early summer
10
    for that. But we'll talk about that again next meeting.
11
             But early summer to start the trials. Okay?
12
             All right, everybody. Thank you very much. We'll
13
    talk to you again soon.
14
             (Proceedings concluded at 1:47 p.m.)
15
16
             I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript
    from the record of proceedings in the above-entitled matter.
17
                                   5th of January, 2023
    /S/ Ann Marie Mitchell
18
    CRR, RDR, RMR, CCR-NJ
                                   Date
    Official Court Reporter
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
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	ı	T	T	1
,	9:2	bellwether [1] - 15:9	computer-aided [1] -	7:17, 7:18, 7:23
<u> </u>	Actavis [2] - 2:5, 2:5	best [1] - 13:6	1:25	<u>deficiency</u> [9] - 6:15,
/S [1] - 15:17	ACTION[1] - 1:3	Beverly[1] - 14:19	concluded [1] - 15:14	7:3, 7:7, 7:11, 7:14,
	action [3] - 4:7, 5:13,	billing [1] - 10:12	conditions [1] - 5:5	10:5, 10:17, 13:2,
0	8:8		CONFERENCE [1] -	13:15
		bills [1] - 7:21		deficient [1] - 6:22
<u>07068 [1] - 1:14</u>	actions [1] - 6:6	Bishop [2] - 3:24, 9:9	<u>1:5</u>	
<u>08101 [1] - 1:8</u>	ADAM[1] - 1:13	blank[1] - 6:21	<u>conference</u> [2] - 3:25,	Deputy [1] - 2:9
	<u>additional [1] - 13:18</u>	Boulevard [1] - 1:20	9:18	despite [1] - 9:3
<u>1</u>	addressed [1] - 12:16	Building [1] - 1:7	Conley [2] - 3:24, 9:9	diagnosed [4] - 8:9,
103 [1] - 1:13	Administrator[1] -	bundled [1] - 10:9	<u>consent</u> [2] - 4:25,	<u>8:10, 8:11, 8:16</u>
12th [2] - 7:3, 7:5	14:21	but [1] - 13:3	<u>5:14</u>	diagnosis [9] - 6:16,
16386 [1] - 4:16	afternoon [3] - 3:3,	_	continuation [1] -	6:24, 6:25, 8:4, 8:5,
19-md-02875 [1] - 1:3	<u>3:5, 3:11</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>3:20</u>	8:6, 8:7, 8:13, 8:24
1:30 [2] - 1:9, 3:2	agenda [3] - 3:7,	California [1] - 1:17	<u>continue</u> [2] - 3:23,	<u>Diana [2] - 10:2, 13:25</u>
1:47 _[1] - 15:14	<u>14:14, 14:25</u>	Camden [1] - 1:8	<u>12:1</u>	died [1] - 12:4
1.47 [1] - 13.14	agree [3] - 5:6, 5:24,	cancer[11] - 6:16,	Continued [1] - 2:1	differentiates [1] -
2	<u>13:10</u>	6:24, 6:25, 8:4, 8:5,	<u>Cooper [1] - 1:7</u>	<u>6:23</u>
<u>2</u>	aided [1] - 1:25	8:9, 8:14, 8:16, 8:17,	<u>core [1] - 6:15</u>	disagree [1] - 6:18
2022 [1] - 12:5	ALSO [1] - 2:7	8:19, 8:24	<u>correct</u> [5] - 5:1, 5:17,	discovery [1] - 13:15
2023 [2] - 1:8, 15:17	<u>amended [2] - 12:8,</u>	capable [1] - 13:16	<u>9:14, 9:16, 15:16</u>	discuss [1] - 15:1
2500 [1] - 2:3	<u>12:10</u>	Carrie [4] - 3:14, 4:1,	<u>counsel</u> [6] - 5:1, 6:4,	dismiss [7] - 4:7, 4:13,
2625 [1] - 1:17	amendment[1] -	4:4, 9:5	<u>7:4, 13:8, 14:16,</u>	<u>5:3, 6:12, 7:24, 8:23,</u>
2800 [1] - 1:20	<u>12:16</u>	<u>carry [4] - 11:23,</u>	<u>15:5</u>	<u>9:1</u>
	Amoia _[2] - 3:24, 9:9	11:24, 13:11, 14:14	counterclaim [2] - 6:9,	dismissal [9] - 3:18,
3	Angeles [1] - 1:17	Carter [2] - 14:20,	<u>6:11</u>	<u>5:6, 5:15, 5:18, 5:25,</u>
30 [2] - 4:12, 7:16	Ann [4] - 10:1, 10:4,	14:21	<u>course</u> [1] - 7:19	<u>6:5, 6:7, 6:14, 8:7</u>
	<u>13:24, 15:17</u>	case [17] - 3:18, 3:20,	Court [2] - 1:23, 15:18	<u>dismissals[1] - 5:10</u>
30305 _[1] - 2:4	ann [1] - 1:23	3:25, 4:9, 4:13, 4:19,	COURT [1] - 1:1	<u>dismissed</u> [6] - 3:23,
<u>3333 [1] - 2:3</u>	AnnMarie_Mitchell@	5:20, 6:12, 6:19,	Court's [2] - 5:4, 7:15	<u>5:20, 6:4, 9:5, 9:8,</u>
4	njd.uscourts.gov [1]	7:24, 8:7, 8:23, 8:25,	Courthouse [1] - 1:7	<u>9:12</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>- 1:23</u>	9:18, 11:12, 13:5,	Courtroom [1] - 2:9	DISTRICT [3] - 1:1,
4 [2] - 1:8, 14:9	answer [2] - 5:13, 6:10	14:6	covers [1] - 14:25	<u>1:1, 1:10</u>
4000 [1] - 1:20	answers [1] - 5:11	cases [5] - 3:24, 5:12,	CRR [1] - 15:18	docket [4] - 4:8, 4:10,
41(a)(2[2] - 5:3, 6:6	<u>anyway [1] - 13:5</u>	9:14, 9:22, 9:24	<u>cure [1] - 7:5</u>	<u>4:12, 4:19</u>
445 [1] - 1:17	apologies [1] - 14:3	Casper [1] - 14:20	cured [2] - 7:17, 14:7	Donahue [1] - 14:18
4th [1] - 1:7	applicable [1] - 6:20	CCR [1] - 15:18	<u>curing</u> [2] - 7:17, 7:23	_
	application [1] - 6:3	CCR-NJ _[1] - 15:18	Czajkowski [1] - 14:18	<u> </u>
5	appreciate [1] - 13:13	Centrality [2] - 7:4,	CZAJKOWSKI [1] -	early [2] - 15:9, 15:11
	<u>area [1] - 6:16</u>	7:8	<u>14:19</u>	eight [2] - 13:20,
<u>576-7018</u> [1] - 1:24	<u>argument [1] - 7:2</u>	certify [1] - 15:16		14:11
<u>5th [1] - 15:17</u>	Atlanta [1] - 2:4	cervical[1] - 8:15	<u>D</u>	Eisenhower [1] - 1:13
_	authority [1] - 12:6	chart [3] - 3:19, 7:9,	Date [1] - 15:18	end [2] - 11:19, 12:10
<u>7</u>	authorizations [1] -	7:14	date [2] - 13:9, 14:2	endometrial [1] - 8:14
77056 [1] - 1:21	<u>7:20</u>	checked [1] - 4:18	DAVID[1] - 1:20	entered [2] - 4:8, 4:19
		circulated [2] - 7:9,	David [1] - 9:23	entities [1] - 5:16
8	В	7:14	days [1] - 7:5	entitled [1] - 15:16
	B-A-L-A-Y _[1] - 10:2	CIVIL _[1] - 1:3	death [1] - 12:5	error [1] - 13:14
<u>856 [1] - 1:24</u>	Bacque [3] - 13:24,	Clark[1] - 9:7	defendant [3] - 6:8,	ESQUIRE [5] - 1:13,
	14:6, 14:9	Clerk[1] - 2:8	6:14	1:16, 1:20, 2:3, 2:8
<u>9</u>	BACQUE[3] - 13:24,	client [3] - 8:19, 11:8,	0.14 Defendants [1] - 2:4	Estate [4] - 13:23,
90071 _[1] - 1:17	14:7, 14:10	11:10	<u>defendants [8] - 2:4</u>	14:21, 14:22
		Cohen [1] - 1:7		exactly [1] - 10:16
<u>A</u>	Bailey [2] - 3:24, 9:9	Collins [8] - 3:14,	3:12, 5:6, 5:9, 5:14, 5:10, 14:4, 14:12	expectation[1] - 7:7
	Balay [3] - 10:2, 12:2,	3:15, 3:17, 3:22, 4:2,	5:19, 14:4, 14:13	expectation[1] - 10:6
ability [1] - 12:25	13:25 BALAY (4) 13:25	3.15, 3.17, 3.22, 4.2, 4:4, 8:3, 9:5	defendants' [2] - 6:18,	expenses [5] - 10:6,
<u>able [1] - 8:24</u>	BALAY[1] - 13:25	4.4, 6.3, 9.5 Commencing [1] - 1:9	7:24	10:9, 12:13, 12:21
above-entitled [1] -	Barber [1] - 13:23	<u>complied [3] - 9:3,</u>	<u>defense</u> [7] - 3:13,	10.0, 12.10, 12.21
<u>15:16</u>	Barone [1] - 14:20	10:15, 13:15	4:25, 6:4, 7:4, 9:4,	F
accepted [1] - 6:19	Bass [1] - 9:7	<u>computer [1] - 1:25</u>	13:8, 15:5 deficiencies [5] - 7:6,	<u>F</u>
acknowledged [1] -	behalf [2] - 4:4, 9:22	Computer [1] - 1.20	uenciencies [5] - 1.0,	fact [7] - 6:20, 6:23,

10:7, 12:9, 12:10,	9:23, 10:3, 10:23,	3:6	3:22, 4:2, 9:5, 9:11,	nonconcerts 6:24
12:15, 12:17	<u>9.23, 10.3, 10.23,</u> <u>11:1, 11:4, 11:9,</u>			noncancer [1] - 6:24
		Judicial [1] - 2:8	14:8, 15:16	none [1] - 15:5
fair [1] - 7:25	11:21, 12:4, 13:12	<u>June [1] - 12:5</u>	matters [3] - 9:8, 9:10,	<u>nothing [1] - 6:3</u>
family [1] - 12:5	honestly [1] - 10:19	1.7	<u>9:19</u>	notice [3] - 7:4, 7:8,
Figueroa [1] - 1:17	Honor [17] - 3:11,	<u>K</u>	MAZIE _[1] - 1:12	<u>7:10</u>
file [2] - 6:7, 11:17	<u>3:17, 4:3, 4:6, 4:24,</u>	Karlene [1] - 14:22	McCarty[1] - 9:6	notices [1] - 9:3
filed [7] - 4:6, 4:13,	<u>5:8, 5:17, 6:5, 8:1,</u>	KARLENE [1] - 14:22	MDL _[2] - 7:4, 7:8	November [2] - 7:16,
<u>5:3, 5:11, 5:13, 6:10,</u>	<u>9:16, 9:23, 10:3,</u>	KATZ[1] - 1:12	mean [4] - 11:12,	<u>12:11</u>
<u>11:12</u>	<u>11:21, 13:12, 14:3,</u>	keep [1] - 12:24	<u>11:23, 12:25, 13:6</u>	NUMBER [1] - 1:3
<u>filing [1] - 8:8</u>	<u>14:13, 15:7</u>	Kenneth [3] - 13:24,	meaning [1] - 7:1	<u>number [4] - 4:12,</u>
fine [1] - 13:7	HONORABLE [1] -	14:6, 14:9	means [1] - 6:24	<u>4:14, 14:9</u>
firm [2] - 9:20, 9:21	<u>1:10</u>		mechanical [1] - 1:25	
five [6] - 3:24, 7:5,	Honorable [2] - 2:8,	King [1] - 9:7	medical [6] - 7:21,	0
<u>9:14, 9:17, 9:18,</u>	<u>3:1</u>	Knudson [4] - 10:1,	<u>10:6, 10:11, 12:13,</u>	
<u>13:22</u>	hopefully [1] - 13:18	<u>10:4, 10:16, 13:24</u>	<u>12:21</u>	Oak [1] - 1:20
Fleming [2] - 9:21,	Houston [1] - 1:21	KNUDSON [1] - 13:24	Medicare [4] - 10:13,	object [1] - 13:14
9:24	hypertensia[1] - 8:15	Kreseski [1] - 14:23	<u>11:16</u>	objections [1] - 14:16
FLEMING [1] - 1:19		KRESESKI[1] - 14:23	medications [1] -	October [2] - 7:3, 7:5
following [1] - 12:24	l I	Kugler [2] - 2:8, 3:3	12:14	Official [2] - 1:23,
foregoing [1] - 15:16	identified :: 0.04	KUGLER [2] - 1:10,	meeting [1] - 15:10	<u>15:18</u>
forward [1] - 14:14	identified [1] - 6:21	<u>3:2</u>	might [1] - 8:16	one [3] - 3:8, 3:19,
four [1] - 10:24	<u>III [2] - 13:24, 14:10</u>	Kwoka [1] - 9:6	MIKAYELYAN[12] -	<u>12:2</u>
fourth [1] - 14:6	<u>IIIG [1] - 10:7</u>	KWOKA [1] - 9:7	1:16, 4:3, 4:6, 4:12,	operative [1] - 5:19
FRCP[1] - 5:3	important [1] - 13:5		4:16, 4:18, 4:24, 5:2,	opportunity [3] - 6:7,
FREEMAN[1] - 1:12	inadvertence [1] -	L	6:5, 8:5, 8:13, 8:22	<u>6:12, 13:18</u>
future [5] - 8:9, 8:11,	<u>7:10</u>	<u>larry [1] - 2:9</u>	Mikayelyan[1] - 4:4	opposed [1] - 5:10
8:17, 8:19, 8:24	<u>Inc [2] - 2:5, 2:5</u>	Law [1] - 2:8	minute [1] - 8:2	order [8] - 5:4, 5:20,
0.17, 0.19, 0.24	included [1] - 12:20	<u>LAW [1] - 2.8</u> <u>LAW [1] - 1:16</u>	Mirabile [1] - 9:6	<u>7:12, 7:15, 9:11,</u>
	incomplete [1] - 12:13		mistake [1] - 7:10	<u>9:13, 13:8, 14:8</u>
<u>G</u>	incompleteness [1] -	leaves [1] - 14:11	Mitchell [3] - 1:7, 1:23,	orders [6] - 3:8, 3:23,
Gale [1] - 13:23	<u>12:15</u>	left [2] - 3:9, 6:21	15:17	<u>9:8, 9:17, 11:24,</u>
GALE [1] - 13:23	individual [1] - 4:13	letter [1] - 7:13	morning [4] - 4:3, 4:8,	<u>14:1</u>
generally [1] - 12:14	Individually [1] -	Levin [1] - 9:20	4:11, 4:18	ordinarily [1] - 5:18
Georgia [1] - 2:4	<u>14:21</u>	Lewis [2] - 3:24, 9:9	most [1] - 7:18	Owens [3] - 3:19, 9:9,
given [4] - 5:11, 7:8,	Industries [1] - 2:4	<u>LIABILITY [1] - 1:4</u>	motion [2] - 9:1, 9:4	<u>9:11</u>
<u>10:8, 11:17</u>	<u>information [4] - 6:16,</u>	<u>list [1] - 14:6</u>	moving [1] - 15:8	
grant [1] - 9:1	<u>11:16, 12:17, 13:19</u>	listed [6] - 3:20, 10:5,	MR [27] - 3:11, 3:17,	P
granted [1] - 9:4	<u>initial [1] - 7:2</u>	<u>10:6, 12:12, 14:1,</u>	4:3, 4:6, 4:12, 4:16,	p.m [3] - 1:9, 3:2,
GREENBERG [1] - 2:2	<u>injuries [1] - 6:24</u>	14:23	4:18, 4:24, 5:2, 5:8,	15:14
Greenberg [1] - 3:12	instead [2] - 7:8, 7:14	<u>listing [2] - 11:25,</u>		<u>13.14</u> Parker [1] - 9:6
group [1] - 3:13	interpretation [3] -	14:24	6:5, 8:5, 8:13, 8:22, 0:16, 0:22, 10:2	
guess [1] - 13:22	<u>6:18, 6:19, 7:1</u>	LITIGATION [1] - 1:4	9:16, 9:23, 10:3, 10:23, 11:1, 11:4	Parkway [1] - 1:13
	issue [1] - 10:19	LLC [2] - 1:12, 2:5	10:23, 11:1, 11:4,	part [1] - 6:19
Н	issues [2] - 15:3, 15:6	LLP [2] - 1:19, 2:2	11:9, 11:21, 12:4, 13:12, 14:3, 14:13	particular [1] - 5:13
_	items [1] - 14:25	looking [1] - 15:9	<u>13:12, 14:3, 14:13,</u> 15:7	parties [1] - 5:15
HAFFNER [1] - 1:16	itself [2] - 6:23, 7:12	LORETTA[1] - 2:8	<u> 13.1</u>	PC [1] - 1:16
handling [1] - 3:13		<u>Los [1] - 1:17</u>	NI NI	pending [4] - 10:11,
happy [1] - 3:3	J	<u>Ltd [1] - 2:4</u>	<u>N</u>	11:12, 11:13, 12:20
Happy [1] - 3:5			NE [1] - 2:3	perspective [1] -
HARKINS [8] - 2:3,	Jacqueline [1] - 14:20	<u>M</u>	need [2] - 10:5, 13:14	<u>12:18</u>
<u>3:11, 3:17, 5:8, 9:16,</u>	James [2] - 13:23,	MacStravic[1] - 2:9	NEW [1] - 1:1	PFS [4] - 6:15, 6:22,
<u>14:3, 14:13, 15:7</u>	<u>14:21</u>	majority[1] - 5:11	New [4] - 1:8, 1:14,	<u>7:1, 7:2</u>
Harkins [6] - 3:12, 5:8,	January [2] - 1:8,	management [2] -	<u>3:4, 3:5</u>	<u>ph [1] - 8:15</u>
<u>9:14, 11:22, 13:6,</u>	<u>15:17</u>	3:25, 9:18	next [8] - 3:25, 9:18,	Pharma [1] - 2:5
<u>14:4</u>	JERSEY [1] - 1:1		11:25, 13:8, 14:1,	Pharmaceutical [1] -
hearing [1] - 6:3	<u>Jersey [2] - 1:8, 1:14</u>	mandatory [1] - 6:25	14:14, 14:23, 15:10	<u>2:4</u>
held [1] - 3:1	JEZ [1] - 1:19	Marie [2] - 1:23, 15:17	NJ [1] - 15:18	Pharmaceuticals [1] -
Hernandez [1] - 9:7	<u>joint [1] - 3:13</u>	Mark[1] - 14:18	NOLEN [1] - 1:19	<u>2:5</u>
Hobbs [1] - 9:23	Joseph [1] - 14:22	Mary [3] - 10:1, 10:3,	nonapplicable [1] -	pharmacy [4] - 12:13,
HOBBS [10] - 1:20,	JUDGE [1] - 1:10	13:23	6:22	<u>12:19, 12:22, 13:4</u>
	<u>Judge [3] - 3:3, 3:5,</u>	matter [8] - 3:15, 3:18,		Piedmont [1] - 2:3
Ī	Ī	i e	i e	i e

plaintiff [2] - 6:21,	<u>reached [1] - 10:18</u>	<u>3:2</u>	Streets [1] - 1:7	UNITED [2] - 1:1, 1:10
<u>7:21</u>	reason [2] - 6:13, 7:9	Robert [2] - 2:8, 14:19	submitted [2] - 7:3,	unresolved [1] - 3:15
plaintiff's [4] - 6:20,	received [2] - 7:3, 14:5	Rodriguez [4] - 12:3,	<u>7:20</u>	up [3] - 10:9, 12:21,
6:23, 12:15, 12:17	receiving [1] - 7:15	<u>12:4, 13:25</u>	substantial [1] - 12:17	<u>12:24</u>
Plaintiffs [3] - 1:14,	<u>recent [1] - 12:5</u>	Roseland [1] - 1:14	Suite [3] - 1:17, 1:20,	update [4] - 3:19,
<u>1:18, 1:21</u>	record [5] - 11:11,		<u>2:3</u>	<u>9:14, 14:6, 14:12</u>
plaintiffs [2] - 7:13,	<u>11:13, 13:13, 13:22,</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>summer [3] - 11:13,</u>	updates [2] - 9:16,
<u>15:3</u>	<u>15:16</u>	sartan [1] - 12:14	<u>15:9, 15:11</u>	<u>14:13</u>
plaintiffs' [1] - 14:16	<u>recorded [1] - 1:25</u>	satisfied[1] - 13:10	supply [1] - 13:18	<u>USA [1] - 2:5</u>
pleaded [3] - 6:8, 6:9,	<u>records [18] - 7:21,</u>	satisfy [1] - 5:19		
<u>6:11</u>	<u>10:6, 10:8, 10:12,</u>	saw [1] - 11:24	<u>T</u>	<u>V</u>
point [2] - 8:6, 10:20	<u>10:14, 10:22, 11:1,</u>	second [2] - 7:2,	TELEPHONIC [1] - 1:5	VA [2] - 12:22, 12:23
possession [1] - 7:22	<u>11:2, 11:4, 11:6,</u>	14:24	telephonically [1] -	Vahan [1] - 4:3
possibility [2] - 8:16,	<u>11:8, 11:9, 11:10,</u>	Section [1] - 10:7	3:1	VAHAN[1] - 1:16
8:19 8 -10-10-10-10-10-10-10-10-10-10-10-10-10-	<u>12:7, 12:13, 12:19,</u>	section [4] - 3:19, 6:6,	terminated [4] - 4:9,	VALSARTAN[1] - 1:4
Post [1] - 1:20	12:22, 13:4	6:11, 10:10	<u>4:19, 4:21, 4:22</u>	via [2] - 7:4, 7:8
practical [1] - 13:17	refers [1] - 12:14	see [5] - 3:7, 10:17,	terms [1] - 12:17	voluntary [3] - 5:10,
<u>preclude [1] - 8:8</u> precursor [3] - 8:6,	refile [3] - 8:8, 8:24, 8:25	<u>10:18, 12:9, 13:2</u>	Teva [3] - 2:4, 2:5,	<u>5:15, 5:18</u>
8:14. 8:15	o.25 regarding [4] - 6:5,	seeking [1] - 9:13	<u>3:12</u>	
8:14, 8:15 prejudice [15] - 4:7,	6:16, 7:10, 7:13	send [1] - 11:19	<u>Texas [1] - 1:21</u>	<u>W</u>
4:21, 4:23, 5:7, 5:21,	related [1] - 6:15	sent [1] - 7:13	text [2] - 4:8, 4:19	<u>waiting [1] - 10:13</u>
5:25, 6:4, 6:8, 6:12,	relist [1] - 14:11	sheet [7] - 6:20, 6:23,	The Court [33] - 3:3,	<u>wants [2] - 3:10, 5:22</u>
6:14, 7:25, 8:7, 8:23,	relisted [1] - 9:10	<u>10:7, 12:9, 12:10,</u>	<u>3:7, 3:14, 4:1, 4:5,</u>	weeks [1] - 10:25
9:2, 9:5	remains [1] - 3:15	<u>12:15, 12:18</u>	<u>4:10, 4:15, 4:17,</u>	willing [2] - 8:22,
PRESENT [1] - 2:7	removed [1] - 3:21	SHERI [1] - 14:20	<u>4:20, 4:25, 5:5, 5:22,</u>	11:24
preserve [1] - 13:14	render [1] - 6:22	Sheri [1] - 14:20	6:3, 6:11, 8:2, 8:10,	Willis [1] - 13:23
pretty [1] - 13:4	Reporter [2] - 1:23,	show [13] - 3:8, 3:23,	8:18, 9:1, 9:20, 10:1, 10:21, 10:24, 11:3,	withdraw [1] - 14:7
problem [1] - 11:19	<u>15:18</u>	5:21, 7:12, 7:16, 9:8, 9:11, 9:13, 9:17,	11:6, 11:18, 11:22,	withdrawn [1] - 14:10
proceedings [1] -	<u>represent [1] - 6:1</u>	<u>9.11, 9.13, 9.17,</u> <u>11:24, 13:8, 14:1,</u>	13:4, 13:20, 14:9,	witness [1] - 7:20
<u>15:16</u>	representative [2] -	14:8	14:16, 14:18, 15:5,	
Proceedings [2] -	<u>12:3, 13:25</u>	showing [1] - 12:13	<u>15:8</u>	<u>Y</u>
1:25, 15:14	representing [1] -	signatures [1] - 7:21	therefore [1] - 6:21	Year [2] - 3:4, 3:5
PROCEEDINGS [1] -	<u>5:16</u>	situation [1] - 12:23	Thomas [1] - 14:18	yesterday[1] - 4:7
3:1 process [4] - 5:21,	<u>request [9] - 4:7, 4:13,</u> 5:3, 6:7, 7:24, 9:17,	Skadden [2] - 5:22,	Thompson [1] - 9:7	Yount [1] - 9:6
7:22, 13:10, 13:16	10:12, 12:7, 14:7	<u>5:24</u>	Thomson [1] - 14:19	
produce [1] - 12:25	requested [3] - 11:11,	SLATER [2] - 1:12,	THOMSON [1] - 14:19	<u>Z</u>
produced [3] - 1:25,	12:8, 12:23	<u>1:13</u>	three [2] - 9:3, 9:20	ZHP [3] - 5:14, 5:16,
11:14, 12:24	requests [5] - 6:14,	SMITH[1] - 2:8	today [3] - 3:7, 3:13,	6:1
PRODUCTS [1] - 1:4	10:12, 11:12, 11:13,	Smith [1] - 14:22	10:18 took[1] - 7:5	
progress [3] - 11:25,	<u>11:17</u>	soon [1] - 15:13 sorry [1] - 4:10	totalled [1] - 12:21	
<u>13:9, 14:10</u>	<u>require [1] - 5:14</u>	<u>sorry [1] - 4:10</u> <u>specifically [1] - 6:6</u>	touch [1] - 13:8	
proof [1] - 12:13	<u>required [2] - 6:17,</u>	<u>standpoint [1] - 13:17</u>	towards [1] - 15:9	
provide [2] - 10:21,	<u>10:16</u>	start [4] - 9:25, 10:3,	transcript [2] - 1:25,	
11:4	requirement [1] - 6:25	15:8, 15:11	<u>15:16</u>	
provided [5] - 11:1,	requirements [1] - 9:3	started [2] - 7:16	transcription [1] -	
<u>11:2, 11:6, 11:10,</u> 11:11	respect [1] - 14:8	statement [1] - 14:15	<u>1:25</u>	
pursuant [1] - 5:20	respect[1] - 14.6	STATES [2] - 1:1, 1:10	Traurig [1] - 3:12	
put [2] - 10:9, 13:22	14:17, 15:4	STATUS [1] - 1:5	TRAURIG [1] - 2:2	
	RESPONSE [1] - 3:5	stenography [1] - 1:25	<u>trial [1] - 8:18</u>	
Q	rest [1] - 7:23	Steve [3] - 3:12, 5:8,	trials [2] - 15:9, 15:11	
	result [1] - 7:9	14:3	true [2] - 3:16, 3:17	
Quarles [1] - 9:7 quote [1] - 8:19	<u>return [3] - 10:13,</u>	STEVEN[1] - 2:3	two [1] - 9:21 typically [1] - 5:10	
<u>quoto [1] - 0.13</u>	<u>13:9, 14:2</u>	still [4] - 3:16, 5:20, 11:20, 13:2	<u> </u>	
R	<u>returnable [1] - 9:17</u>	<u>stipulate [1] - 5:15</u>	U	
_	RMR [1] - 15:18	<u>stipulation [1] - 5:18</u>	_	
RDR [1] - 15:18	Road [1] - 2:3	Street [1] - 1:17	<u>U.S.[1] - 1:7</u>	
RE [1] - 1:4	ROBERT [2] - 1:10,		<u>under [2] - 5:3, 6:6</u>	
L	l	l .	l .	l .